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ABSTRACT

Defining relational competence as the extent to which objectives functionally related to communication are perceived to be fulfilled through interaction appropriate to the interpersonal context, this paper offers a brief summary of a model of relational competence, along with its major definitional, conceptual, and measurement assumptions. In addition, the paper examines the main components of the model--motivation, knowledge, skills, context, and outcomes--and identifies potential operational candidates for each component for heuristic purposes. The paper concludes with a review of research that has been conducted in the measurement of relational competence and in the validation of the construct. (Author/FL)

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THE RELATIONAL COMPETENCE CONSTRUCT: DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Abstract

A model of relational competence is summarized briefly, and its major definitional, conceptual and measurement assumptions are delineated. Relational competence is defined as the extent to which objectives functionally related to communication are perceived to be fulfilled through interaction appropriate to the interpersonal context. The major components of the model are motivation, knowledge, skills, context and outcomes. Potential operational candidates are identified for each of these components for heuristic purposes. Finally, the research that has been performed in the measurement of relational competence and the validation of the construct is reviewed.

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THE RELATIONAL COMPETENCE CONSTRUCT: DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

The concept of competence in interaction is not new. The term "social competence" can be traced back to the 1930's (Doll, 1935) and the notion of "interpersonal competence" originated in the 1950's (Foote & Cottrell, 1955; Stanton & Litwak, 1955; Sullivan, 1950). Despite this extensive history in social science, the construct of competence continues to be dominated by the assumptions of trait psychology. Trait conceptions of competence certainly have a role in theories of social behavior, but it also seems clear that they are insufficient by themselves. Interactional conceptions of competence have not been common, partly because of the complexity and breadth of the problem. If competence in interaction refers to an ability, or perception of an ability, then it applies to virtually all social behavior. Further, a comprehensive theory of competence in communicating would attempt to explain the diverse processes of acquisition, performance, and perception. Obviously, the shear magnitude of the problem has impaired theoretical advancement. While we cannot offer an immediate solution to the problem, we can provide a theoretic framework and a tentative model of relational competence. After outlining the assumptions and propositions of the model, we will review the research to date on the construct of relational competence.

A Propositional Model of Relational Competence

Definitions

Relational competence is the extent to which objectives functionally related to communication are perceived to be fulfilled through interaction appropriate to the interpersonal context.

Competence is an evaluative judgment regarding the perceived quality of a performance (i.e., a set of behavior). The two dimensions of performance quality used to define competence are appropriateness and effectiveness. This definition varies from many in two important ways. First, unlike many conceptualizations of competence as either appropriateness or effectiveness, relational competence is comprised of both. Second, competence, strictly defined, is an interpersonal impression rather than a skill, ability, or trait.

Relational is a qualification applied to indicate the domain and contextual parameters of this competence construct. Specifically, relational competence involves judgments made in and about interpersonal encounters mediated by relationship specific criteria.

Objectives of interaction, whether tacit or explicit, are relatively desirable ends accomplished through communication as a means. Interactants need not be consciously aware of the objective(s), but at some point must be cognizant of the relative desirability of the ends. Desirability is a judgment made relative to alternatively possible outcomes. For example, even though the process of interpersonal conflict may be viewed as inherently undesirable by some interactants, and the immediate outcomes rarely positively valenced, there are more and less desirable ways of engaging in conflict. Competent conflict would be viewed as the least undesirable form of interaction in this instance.

Functionally related to communication is a phrase reflecting the assumption that human interaction is functional; that communication does rather than just is. Communication behavior produces effects, intended and unintended, in the interactants involved. When communication functions to accomplish relatively desirable

objectives, it is effective. The extent of effectiveness is contingent on the extent of objectives attained and their degree of desirability. It is unclear how various objectives and valence intensities combine in an episode to produce a fairly unidimensional outcome (such as communication satisfaction; see Hecht, 1978b), but some kind of balance or summation may occur.

Appropriate refers to a judgment that communication avoids significant violation of relational standards, rules, or expectations. Interaction can be appropriate if it abides by extant relational rules, manages new rules or acceptable bounds of extant rules, or if it is appropriate relative to alternatively possible forms of interaction.

Interpersonal context is a complex of perceptual factors including judgments and purpose or function (Thomas & Bookwalter, 1982). Dimensions among these factors may overlap considerably or virtually not at all. Standards of appropriateness and effectiveness are contingent on these contextual judgments.

Assumptions

Conceptual Assumptions

Competence is an interpersonal judgment. This is a definitional assumption made for several heuristic reasons. The primary reason has to do with the contextuality of competence. A given behavior may be viewed as competent in certain contexts and not others. Further, a behavior performed in a given context may be viewed as competent by one interactant and not another. In other words, we assume that the competence of a given behavior depends on the context and person(s) making the judgment. With this assumption in mind, then, competence does not reside in the ability to

produce a behavior (e.g., trait), or in the behavior itself, but in the evaluation of that ability or skill. The behavior itself is just that, behavior produced through a skill. The relevant question now is not what behaviors are competent, but what behaviors are perceived to be competent.

The inference of competence is derived from an interdependent process. Competence is not an individual phenomenon, even though it often is treated as such operationally. A person is perceived as competent based on an interpersonal encounter, and many complex factors can affect this judgment. Judgments of competence may turn on a specific remark, or on a molar "feeling" regarding the conversation. Judgments of competence may change over time, and in light of occurrences external to the episode being judged.

The inference of competence is based on effective and appropriate interaction. As implied by the definition of relational competence, two judgments are necessary to define competence. It seems obvious that a person can be appropriate but not effective, and effective but not appropriate. Our concern is with interaction that is competent in a relational sense. Relationally competent interaction accomplishes objectives, but does so in a way that does not violate the bounds of acceptability established in the interpersonal context. If competence is an indication of communication quality, then interaction that is both appropriate and effective is of better quality than if it is only one or the other.

The inference of competence is made along a continuum. To some extent, this assumption is a logical derivative of assumptions one and two. If competence is a perceptual phenomenon and contingent on numerous factors, rarely would one expect it to be a simple

THIS ASSUMPTION DOVETAILS WITH OUR ASSUMPTION THAT COMPETENCE IS AN IMPRESSION. ONLY AT THE MOST MICROSCOPIC LEVELS OF BEHAVIOR CAN YOU SPEAK OF A BEHAVIOR OR PERFORMANCE AS BEING THERE OR NOT THERE. AT THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION WE DESIRE, E.G., INTERACTION MANAGEMENT, EXPRESSIVENESS, ASSERTIVENESS, LISTENING, ETC., IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE A JUDGMENT REGARDING HOW WELL THE BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN PERFORMED.

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dichotomous judgment. We assume that behavior is more or less competent (i.e., appropriate and effective) rather than either competent or incompetent.

Certain personal attributes increase the liklihood of being perceived as competent. This assumption really is based on an underlying assumption that there is substantial correspondence between actor behavior and other's perception of that behavior. There is plenty of reason (theoretical and empirical) to believe that this correspondence is by no means complete. This is another way of saying that despite how "good" a person's behavior is by normative standards, there is no guarantee that it will be perceived as such in a given encounter. However, across numerous episodes and a across society's collective interactions, it seems reasonable to conjecture that certain behaviors are generally seen as competent. These behaviors, and the attributes that make their performance possible, are more likely to be viewed as competent than other personal attributes.

Methodological Assumptions

Measures of competence should reference behavioral (molecular) and evaluative (molar) impressions. If our concern is with impressions of competence, and the behaviors that produce them, then measures of competence should reference both. Ultimately, it will be possible to relate the molecular items to the molar evaluations within and across contexts to assess the behaviors that most consistently relate to competence impressions.

Measures of competence should be related to functional outcomes. As an assessment of effectiveness, it is vital that outcomes functionally relevant to the interaction be referenced. For example, assessing perceived assertiveness in a phatic

interaction does not tap a relevant or functional outcome for that episode.

Measures of competence should be event-specific. A recent review identified over 50 measures of competence (Spitzberg & Cupach, in press). Only three of these measures were event-specific. Most of them were dispositional, trait-like measures that reference competence across situations, episodes, or contexts. Yet, research consistently indicates that these measures are not yet very predictive of actual behavior. If, indeed, competence judgments vary from context to context, then measures should be sensitive to these contextual effects.

Measures of competence should allow self and other assessment. Given a relational perspective, it is vital that disparities and consistencies between self and other perceptions of competence be identified. If there are discrepancies, then the locus of measurement has a crucial impact on the theoretical inferences drawn.

Components

The model of relational competence is based on the metaphors of motivation, knowledge, skills, context, and outcomes. The most basic thesis connecting these explanatory metaphors is that as person A's motivation to communicate, knowledge of communication, and skill in communicating within a given context with person B increase, the more competent A is likely to be perceived by self and by B, and the more positive outcomes will accrue to A (see Figure 1). While we are aware of no available research on the

Figure 1 about here

issue, we speculate that extreme positive ranges of the predictor variables are curvilinear to the outcomes. That is, extremely

high motivation, knowledge, or skill may actually detract from one's perceived performance. Excessive motivation might lead to impressions of a communicator "being overeager" or "trying too hard to make a good impression." A communicator who is extremely knowledgeable may be faced with so many alternatively possible responses in a repertoire that an appropriate response cannot be evoked efficiently. Pauses may result from response searching, with appearences of being "stilted" or even "strategic" resulting. Finally, too much of virtually any particular skilled behavior should appear incompetent. Wiemann (1977) speculated, for example, that a person extremely skilled in interaction management might appear too polished and artificial. While he found a linear relationship, it is difficult to know if truly extreme scorers were observed. In most everyday conversations, the curvilinearity of these relationships is not likely to be a concern, but the possibility needs to be recognized theoretically.

In the sections that follow, the components are described briefly, and extant operational candidates are identified. It should be noted here, however, that the measures listed as possible operationalizations of the model's components are intended more for suggestive purposes rather than actual operational definitions. For example, several of the trait measures have been used in prior research, and have displayed only moderate relationships to context-specific competence measures. This is expected, in part, because the trait measures are not designed to predict specific behaviors in particular contexts.

Motivation

Motivation is the confluence of psychological factors (both affective and cognitive) that lead self to desire and pursue a specific interactional objective or objectives in a given encounter. Most extant constructs relevant to motivation have been based on trait psychology, but such constructs could still apply over the course of numerous episodes. Among the constructs that reference positive motivation include effectance motivation (Lamont, 1983; Sherer, et al., 1982), social self-esteem (Helmreich & Stapp, 1974; Lawson, et al., 1979), internal locus of control (Lefcourt, et al., 1979), ego-involvement (Wilmot, 1971), altercentric interpersonal orientation (Walters & Snavely, 1981), dyadic trust and satisfaction (Larzalere & Huston, 1980; Spanier, 1976), and possibly assertiveness (Del Greco, 1982; Galassi, et al., 1976). Negative motivation is reflected in constructs such as communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1977,), and social anxiety (Leary, 1980; Curran, et al., 1980). Notice that virtually all of these constructs combine elements of valued communicative goals, confidence in the attainment of goals, or the negative consequences of communication.

Knowledge

Knowledge, in our usage, is the comprehension of, and the capability to generate comprehension of, the characteristics of a given encounter relevant to a competent performance. The content of knowledge would include substantive information on the topic(s) discussed, the other person, the rules involved, and procedural information on how to perform given this substantive knowledge. Few pure operationalizations seem to exist, although several are relevant to communicative knowledge. Self-monitoring (Snyder,

1979), cognitive complexity (O'Keefe & Sypher, 1980), empathy (Cochrane, 1974; Davis, 1980), role-taking (Chmelewski & Wolf, 1980), social intelligence and problem-solving (Heppner & Petersen, 1982; Thorndike, 1936), interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills (Spivack, et al., 1976; Shure, 1981), and to some extent, intimacy (Orlofsky, 1976) all reference knowledge or knowledge acquisition ability in communicative encounters. These measures assess knowledge of communication, specific communicative contexts, or ability to process social information in functional ways.

Skills

Skills are the behaviors actually performed in an interactional episode. Our interest is primarily in the perceptual structure of these behaviors and how the perceived factors relate to competence impressions and objectives. The precise perceptual structure (i.e., dimensions or factors) of interactional behavior is not well understood at present. Skills have been characterized at very broad levels of abstraction (e.g., encoding, decoding; see Monge, et al., 1982), at very specific levels of abstraction (e.g., dealing with negative criticism, conflicting with parents, disclosure of feelings, assertion of rights, etc.; see Curran, et al., 1980), and even as molecular behaviors (e.g., eye contact, gestures, use of questions, etc.; see Greenwald, 1977). When several factor analytic studies are examined, a fairly common set of factors appear to recur, including expressiveness, interaction management, altercentrism (e.g., listening, empathy, role-taking, attentiveness), and social anxiety (Duran & Wheeless, 1980; Duran, et al., 1981; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1981; Kelly & Chase, 1978; Phelps & Snavely, 1980; Steffen, et al., 1979; Walters & Snavely, 1981; Wiemann, 1977).

The typical approach to measuring skills is the coding of videotaped role-plays into discrete behavioral units, although many self-report measures exist that purport to assess skills as well.

An a priori classification of behavioral components is displayed in Table 1. Every one of these behaviors has been

Table 1 about here

identified in the literature as being relevant to competent interaction (see Spitzberg & Cupach, in press for greater detail). However, to date, their perceived structure has not been investigated to confirm this a priori classification.

Context

The concept of context is becoming an important research concern. While contexts have been conceived in various ways, consensus appears to be growing (a) that contexts are best conceptualized as subjective, not objective, phenomena; (b) that contexts involved cultural, social, environmental, relational, and functional features; and (c) that each of these features can be characterized efficiently along a finite set of dimensions or types. Relying on the work of several authors, the heuristic set of questions in Table 2 is constructed. In answering each of these

Table 2 about here

questions, a communicator is capable of assessing many of the relevant contextual rules of interaction. For research purposes, Smith-Lovin (1979) has modified a form of Heise's (1977) affect control theory that can be used to predict competence impression formation. Simply put, a person will be perceived as competent to the extent he or she performs congruently with positively held contextual expectancies, or incongruently with

negatively held contextual expectancies. Each of the questions in Table 2 reflects a possible expectancy. For example, a church usually is viewed as good and quiet, and the audience as relatively weak. A person who is raucous, loud and uncontrollable would therefore violate these expectancies, and his or her impression of competence likely would suffer.

Outcomes

If communication is functional, then it produces effects. These effects, in turn, provide criteria by which the effectiveness and appropriateness of interaction can be judged. Several outcomes have been studied that relate to competence, including communication satisfaction, feeling good, perceived confirmation, perceived appropriateness and effectiveness. These constructs, and their relationship to impressions of competence, are reviewed in the following sections.

Relational Competence Research

The relational competence construct is operationalized by two scales: self-rated competence (SRC) and rating of alter-competence (RAC). The self-rated competence scale elicits one's judgments about one's own competence in a given conversation. Subjects respond to statements describing their behavior in a particular communication episode. (e.g., "I was confident"; "I talked too much about myself"). The rating of alter-competence scale identifies a person's perception of his or her conversational partner's competence in a given conversation. The RAC scale contains statements describing the respondent's conversational partner's behavior (e.g., "S/he was supportive"; "S/he spoke too slowly").

SRC and RAC consistently have demonstrated high reliability. Internal consistency (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) has ranged from .87 to .92 for SRC with an average reliability of .90. RAC has shown coefficient alpha to range from .90 to .94, with an average of .93. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis reveals that both SRC and RAC display stable dimensions labeled other-orientation and expressiveness. It is noteworthy that judgments of competence reflected in SRC and RAC do not appear to be confounded by a social approval response set (as measured by Crowne and Marlow's Social Desirability Scale, 1964; see Spitzberg & Phelps, 1982).

Empirical support continues to accumulate for the relational competence construct. SRC and RAC instruments have been administered to more than 2000 subjects. Research has obtained judgments regarding recalled conversations, conversations just completed, and conversations interrupted in progress. Relational competence has been assessed in settings both natural and manipulated. The communication situations studied have been diverse, including: getting acquainted, managing conflict, and solving a problem. What follows is a select summary of the key findings of this research. In general, the evidence provides considerable support for the construct validity of relational competence.

Satisfaction/Confirmation

It can be argued that "the most important criterion of successful communication is the gratification that an exchange of messages provides for the participants" (Ruesch, 1972, p. 36). Hecht (1978a, 1978b) has conceptualized communication satisfaction as a favorable affective response to the reinforcement of positive expectations in a conversation. Both self-rated competence and

rating of alter-competence have been significantly and positively associated with communication satisfaction (Cupach, 1982; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1981; Spitzberg, 1982; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1983). Rating of alter-competence has been consistently a better predictor of communication satisfaction than self-rated competence, accounting for between 48 and 59 percent of the variance. Moreover, when rating of alter-competence is controlled for, the effect of self-rated competence on communication satisfaction is severely attenuated. When combined, self-rated competence and rating of alter-competence have explained as much as 64 percent of the variance in communication satisfaction. Spitzberg and Hecht (1983) found that rating of alter-competence was also significantly related to satisfaction with self (r^2 = .14) and satisfaction with the other person (r^2 = .33).

Conceptually and empirically related to communication satisfaction is the construct of feeling good--an indication of state self-esteem (Prisbell, 1979). Feeling good represents the situational experience of positive affect. Its semantic domain is defined by terms such as good, valuable, happy, interesting, attractive, and so forth. In a study of problem-solving communication, Cupach and Spitzberg (1983) discovered that feeling good was positively correlated with self-rated competence and rating of alter-competence. The combination of these two competence measures explained 32 percent of feeling good variance.

A confirmed sense of self-identity has also been identified as a logical outcome of competent communication (Wilmot, 1979). Communication is confirming when it recognizes the other, is responsive to the other, accepts the other's self-experience, and

suggests involvement with the other (Sieburg, 1973). Self-rated competence and rating of alter-competence jointly accounted for 68 percent of the variance in perceived confirmation in one investigation (Spitzberg, 1982).

Appropriateness/Effectiveness

Presumably, competent communication results in various forms of satisfaction because it is appropriate and effective. In order to test the definitional assumption of relational competence, Spitzberg and Phelps (1982) developed a self-report instrument of perceived conversational appropriateness and effectiveness (CAE). CAE was comprised of semantic differential scales tapping the semantic domain of appropriatenss and effectiveness (e.g., rude/tactful; successful/unsuccessful). In a study of recalled conversations, 54 percent of the variance in CAE was accounted for by self-rated competence and rating of alter-competence. When actual conversations were used as stimuli in a follow-up study, RAC and SRC combined to share 43 percent of the CAE variance.

Because of the unstable factor structure of CAE, Spitzberg and Canary (1983) revised the instrument by translating the items to Likert-type items to reflect more specifiable behaviors. Interestingly, they discovered that rating of alter-competence was correlated more strongly with perceived appropriateness ($r = .69$) than with perceived effectiveness ($r = .54$). At the same time, self-rated competence exhibited a stronger relationship with perceived effectiveness ($r = .62$) than with perceived appropriateness ($r = .51$). This suggests that the weighting of criteria may differ when evaluating self as opposed to evaluating others. It

makes sense that we tend more to judge ourselves in terms of effectiveness because the standards for goal achievement are personal. On the other hand, when judging the other person, one is affected more by the degree to which the other communicates in a manner appropriate to the shared context, and less by the degree to which the other has achieved his or her own personal goals.

Conflict/Anxiety Behavior

The perception of certain communication behaviors should be associated with the attribution of competence. Cupach (1982) explored the relationship between message strategies utilized during an interpersonal conflict and ratings of communication competence. As predicted, the results clealy indicated that perceptions of competence were consistently more positively associated with the use of constructive conflict message strategies compared to destructive or avoidance strategies. SRC was positively related to the reported use of constructive message strategies and negatively associated with the use of destructive strategies. These perceptions of competence were linked to one's partner's use of strategies as well as one's own use. RAC was also positively related to the use of constructive strategies and negatively associated with the use of destructive strategies by self and other.

It is often argued that anxiety can block effective communication performance. An anxious individual is likely to be self-focused, withdrawn, nonfluent, and inexpressive compared to a relaxed or confident person. Consistent with these symptoms, RAC has exhibited significant inverse relationships with the perception of anxious behavior on the part of alter (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1983; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1983). Thus, a person who at

least appears anxious in a dyadic communicative encounter is likely to be perceived as less competent.

Loneliness/Self-esteem

In an investigation of the connection between loneliness and competence, Spitzberg and Canary (1983) showed that lonely individuals were rated as less competent by their conversational partners as compared to non-lonely people. Apparently, the experience of chronic loneliness results in "attributions of internality and uncontrollability, which , in turn, impair communication motivation and skills" (Spitzberg & Canary, 1983, p. 7). Further, self-rated competence was found to be inversely related to loneliness (Spitzberg & Canary, 1983) and positively correlated with social self-esteem (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1983).

Tests of the Entire Model

Two studies have been performed to test the model of relational competence. Spitzberg (1982) began with extant operationalizations of the model's components. Thus, motivation was operationalized by interpersonal communication apprehension and communication involvement, knowledge by self-monitoring, and skills by self-rated competence and attentiveness. The outcomes studied were communication satisfaction, perceived confirmation, and perceived appropriateness and effectiveness. Actual conversations were induced, and dyad partners rated their partner's competence in addition to the other measures. In all, the results indicated that the trait measures included in the study were substantially correlated to each other, but not to any of the context-specific measures of competence or outcomes. With this in mind, a second study was performed to correct the apparent deficiencies of this investigation.

Spitzberg and Hecht (1983) constructed 15 Likert-type items specifically to measure self-reported motivation, and 15 similar items to reference self-reported knowledge in a conversation. These measures were designed to be context-specific in reference. Rating of alter-competence was also used to assess skills, but in this study, the partner's RAC was used to measure self's skill. That is, A's conversational skill was assessed by B's rating of alter-competence. B also rated A's nonverbal immediacy, anxiety, and interaction management on Likert-type items developed for this study. The sample was 360 persons (180 dyads) in naturally-occurring situations in and around Los Angeles. They were interrupted during normal conversations and asked to complete the questionnaires. Results indicated strong support for the model of relational competence. The components of motivation, knowledge and skill (including immediacy, anxiety, and interaction management) were all related significantly to the outcomes of communication satisfaction, satisfaction with self, and satisfaction with other. In this study, the knowledge measure performed poorly relative to the other measures, however, and is being investigated with other operationalizations.

Implications/Future Directions

The research on self-rated competence and rating of alter-competence, in toto, offers support for the construct validity of relational competence. Relevant positive and negative criteria measures have supported the validity of relational competence measurement. In addition, attributions of relational competence have been empirically linked to general perceptions of behavioral

differences and message preferences. What is further needed is the identification of specific microscopic conversational behaviors and behavioral patterns which discriminate more competent from less competent communicators in diverse contexts.

One assumption supported by relational competence research is the interdependence of competence attributions. The evidence clearly indicates a discrepancy between one's competence as judged by self versus one's competence as judged by others. This underscores the importance of assessing the perceptions of both members of a dyad to obtain a more complete and systemic view of interpersonal competence. Since relational competence is inherently tied to a relational context, the perceptions of both relational partners are relevant. This is further supported by the data that rating of alter-competence is often a better predictor of self's outcomes than is self-rated competence. Likewise, SRC is often a better predictor of alter's outcomes that RAC.

Yet another indication of the interdependence of competence is reflected in the correlations between ratings of self and ratings of alter. For instance,SRC is negatively associated with rating of alter's anxiety ($r = -.43$) and positively associated with rating of alter-competence ($r = .66$) (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1983). Although the evidence continues to suggest a link between communicators' levels of competence, the nature of that link remains enigmatic. We might ask, for example, how and under what conditions does a more competent communicator compensate for a less competent communicator during a conversation? Further, are there optimal individual combinations of competence which yield maximum relational

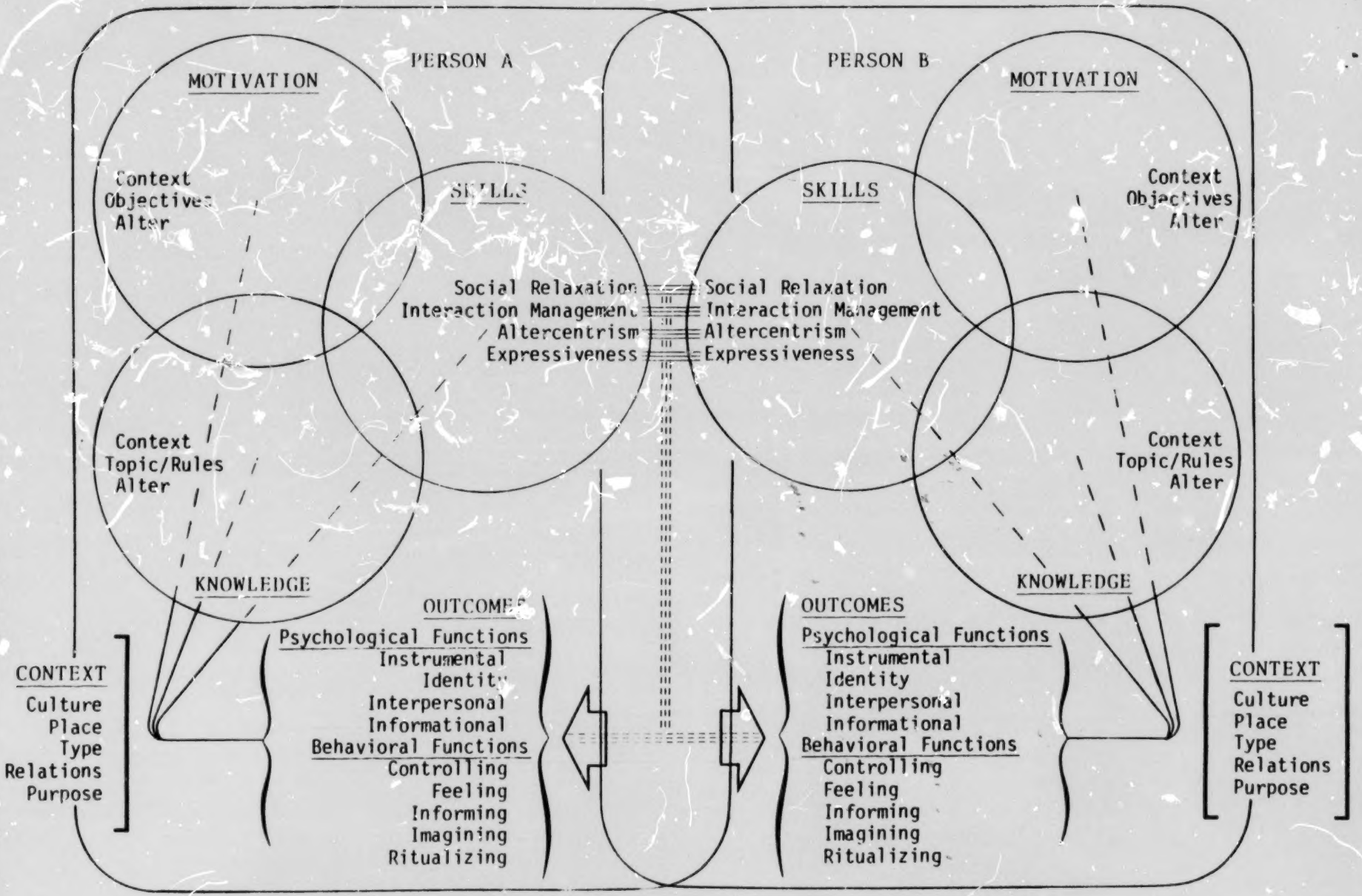

Figure 1
DIAGRAMMATIC MODEL OF RELATIONAL COMPETENCE

satisfaction? Is an incompetent interactant "better off" with a competent partner or with one similarly incompetent? These are just a few of the relational intricacies that await empirical investigation.

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Table 1. Potential Behavioral Features of Competence Skills.

I. INTERACTION MANAGEMENT:
   A. Verbal
      1. Topic initiation and maintenance
      2. Open-ended questions
      3. Use of questions
      4. Sentence completions
      5. Reinforcers
   B. Nonverbal
      1. Intonation, falling pitch
      2. Paralanguage, drawl on last syllable
      3. Buffers, pause fillers
      4. Gesticulations
      5. Gaze
      6. Response latency
      7. Head nods
      9. Interruptions
      10. Stutter starts

II. SOCIAL RELAXATION (ANXIETY):
      1. Touching/manipulating objects
      2. Fidgeting feet and legs
      3. Crossed arms/legs
      4. Eye contact avoidance
      5. Rapid speaking
      6. Self manipulation
      7. Loud speaking
      8. Self grooming
      9. Abrupt head movements
      10. Postural swaying
      11. Arm posture rigidity
      12. Speech blockage
      13. Speech nonfluencies
      14. Topically irrelevant responses
      15. Tense voice

III. EXPRESSIVENESS
   A. Verbal
      1. Affective self-references
      2. Expressing feelings
      3. Expressing opinions
      4. Persistence
      5. Giving clarification
      6. Request for change
      7. Humor
      8. Owing up to
      9. Openness
      10. Experimenting
   B. Nonverbal
      1. Talk time

2. Appropriate affect

3. Appropriate volume

4. Role behavior
5. Laugh/smile

6. Impression leaving
7. Animated
8. Gesturing

9. Vocal range

10. Facial expressiveness

IV. ALTERCENTRISM (OTHER-ORIENTATION)

A. Verbal

1. Identifying feelings

2. Seeking clarification
3. Disqualification
5. Interaction posture
6. Orientation to knowledge
7. Empathy
8. Agreement
9. Compliance/compromise
   Romano & Bellack, 1980)
10. Helping alter own, open, experiment

11. Questions
12. Compliments
13. Personal attention
14. Minimal response
15. Approval

16. Affective partner references

B. Nonverbal

1. Head nods
2. Eye contact

3. Role behavior
4. Attending
5. Positive physical interaction

6. Concern
7. Pleasantness of facial expression

8. Immediacy
9. Reciprocity of affect displays

10. Attentiveness

Table 2. Elaborated Set of Contextual Questions and Dimensions
(Main questions adapted from Thomas & Bookwalter, 1982)

A. What culture is this? Evaluative dimensions (Osgood, May and Miron, 1975)
   1. Association-Dissociation
   2. Superordination-Subordination
   3. Intimacy-formality
   4. Overt-Covert Behavior

B. Where is this? i.e., how is the setting perceived (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974)
   1. Evaluation: Good, nice, usual vs. bad, awful, unusual
   2. Potency: powerful, big, coercive vs. powerless, weak, equal
   3. Activity: fast, young, noisy vs. slow old, quite

C. What kind (i.e., type) of situation is this? (Argyle, Furnahm and Graham, 1981)

   1. Formal social events
   2. Intimate encounters with close friends or relations
   3. Casual encounters with acquaintances
   4. Formal encounters in shops and offices
   5. Asymmetrical social-skills occasions
   6. Negotiation and conflict
   7. Group discussion

D. How do I see myself in relation to the people around me? (Wish,et al., 1980)
   1. Cooperative vs. competitive
   2. Intense vs. superficial
   3. Task oriented vs. non-task oriented
   4. Dominant vs. equal
   5. Impersonal/formal vs. personal/formal

E. What is the purpose of my communication? (Allen and Brown, 1976; Clark and Delia, 1979)
   1. Behavioral
      a. controlling
      b. feeling
      c. informing
      d. imagining
      e. ritualizing
   2. Psychological
      a. identity
      b. interpersonal
      c. instrumental

F. Do I see myself as able to enact the appropriate behavior? (Bandura, 1977)